

DECISION NOTICE:

For Land Exchange/Improvement Project at Varney Bridge Fishing Access Site

Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks
1400 19th Ave
Bozeman, MT 59718
(406) 994-4042

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED ACTION

The Varney Bridge borders the FAS on its northwest corner and is considered by Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) to be functionally obsolete. MDT intends to replace the Varney Bridge by constructing a single span bridge that's wider, longer and higher. Additional land is required for the purpose of constructing the new bridge. MDT would purchase 0.05 acres from the Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks and in exchange MDT would acquire an additional .385 acres of private land to replace the .05 acres required for the new bridge construction. MDT will use the additional .385 acres of land to construct a wider approach providing greater visibility for entering and leaving the FAS. Additionally, MDT will extend the guardrail between the new bridge and the relocated approach to the FAS.

PUBLIC PROCESS AND COMMENT

Two public meetings were held. The first meeting was on February 22, 2017. The second meeting was on August 29, 2018. There were no written comments from the public. However, the general feeling portrayed to MDT staff during the public meetings was strongly supportive of the project.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

The "No Action" alternative was evaluated and is considered not to be feasible and prudent because it would neither address nor correct the transportation need that necessitated the project. The current bridge's load limit does not allow heavier vehicles, such as safety vehicles to use the crossing.

Reconstructing the bridge without impacting the fishing access site approach was considered. All scenarios evaluated resulted in the need for additional road length for guardrail to meet current safety standards, requiring the FAS approach to be relocated further east.

Relocating the bridge upstream or downstream of the existing bridge was also considered. Either of these alternatives would require the acquisition of significant right-of-way and additional bridge and approach engineering, both of which would substantially increase the cost.

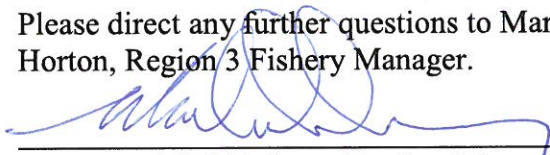
The Preferred Alternative required the least amount of new bridge right-of-way, provided a net increase of acreage to the FAS and provided a safer, wider approach for users.

DECISION

Based on the analysis that has been conducted and the applicable laws, regulations and policies, I have determined that the proposed action affecting the FAS will not have a significant effect on the natural or human environment. Therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement will not be prepared.

It is my decision to implement the proposed action and allow MDT to proceed with the land exchange as described in this analysis and construct the subsequent improvements to the Varney Bridge FAS.

Please direct any further questions to Mark Deleray, Region 3 Supervisor, or Travis Horton, Region 3 Fishery Manager.



Mark Deleray, Region 3 Supervisor

11/15/18

Date

